

STATESMEN WHO FAILED TO WIN THE PRESIDENCY.

There remain in this country but two men of prominence who have unsuccessfully aspired to the Presidency. They are James G. Blaine and John Sherman. The list of their predecessors in thwarted ambition for the office is a long one, and includes the names of more eminent men than have filled this high position in the same period.

John Quincy Adams had done much to give him reputation before he reached the Presidency, not to speak of his services to human freedom later. When General Garfield was made President, also, the nation chose a man who, in reputation for statesmanship, stood in the front rank, though his career thereafter was a disappointment.

It must be remembered that the ablest men in public life invariably aspire to the office. Notwithstanding, since it has been demonstrated that an inferior class of men generally obtain it, and thus that its possession is not in effect a further certificate of greatness to those of the highest eminence the ambition of the latter does not seem lessened. It was of no use to tell Daniel Webster and Henry Clay that the possession of the Presidency would add no cubit to their stature as statesmen. Mr. Clay died an unhappy man because of his failure; Webster was almost literally stricken dead by his disappointment. Horace Greely was, if anything, more suddenly and fatally prostrated from the same cause. Stephen A. Douglas survived but a short period the failure of his ambition for the office.

The list of these great names is a pathetic one. It began with William H. Crawford, of Georgia, who felt himself to be the natural successor of James Monroe, and who probably would have been had not General Jackson entered the political field. Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun next appear in it. Clay defied Jackson in his effort to reach the office, incurred Jackson's undying enmity and opposition, and when Jackson was dead found that his own opportunity was over. Calhoun, too, fell a victim to Jackson, though in Jackson's party, from which he was driven by that iron ruler. Thomas H. Benton and Silas Wright owe their failure to the superior political skill of Martin Van Buren. Wright died soon after. Benton lived to be out of harmony with his party.

Of the public men of prominence of that generation, after Van Buren, but one man ever realized his desire to be President. He was James Buchanan—and it would have been better for his fame had he never held the office. Of the others, Cass, after obtaining the nomination, was treacherously defeated in his own party. Douglas found, in the end, that ambition to have overleaped itself, to his own political ruin. General Scott suffered the most mortifying political defeat on record.

William M. Seward lost a large part of his interest in the anti-slavery cause after his failure of a nomination in 1860. Salmon P. Chase failed to satisfy his ambition after a great struggle. Latest have come Conkling and Blaine and Sherman. The history of their aspirations is too fresh in mind to be recounted.

The list we have reviewed is a remarkable one. No one will question that the names it far transcend in statesmanlike eminence and distinction those who have reached the Presidency during the period which they cover. But that ambition to be President, which was undying among them all, will prevail with their successors. The pride of being the head of from sixty to a hundred millions of people is too tempting to be put away.

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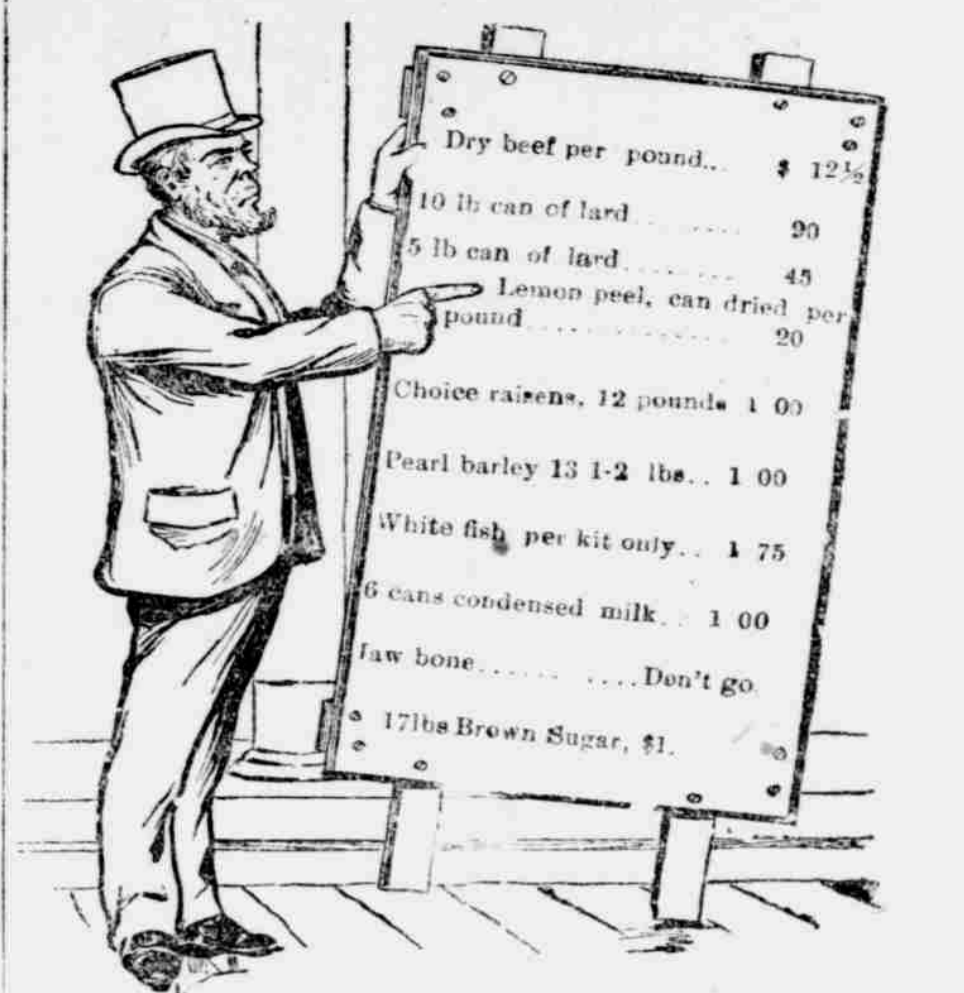
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